

Washington State Department of Transportation
Public Transportation and Rail
Office of Transit Mobility

Grant Technical Work Group Meeting

WSDOT Urban Planning Office

July 19, 2005
9:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

Attendees

Charlie Shell (City of Seattle), Dale Robbins (RTC), Joy Munkers (Community Transit), Karen Richter (PSRC), Lisa Wolterink (Sound Transit), Mike Harbour (Intercity Transit), Patricia Levine (Pierce Transit), Peter Heffernan (King County), Jeanette Johnson (Community Transit), Stephanie Tax (WSDOT), Cathy Silins (WSDOT), Bill Roach (King County), Theresa Smith (WSDOT), Janice Hamil (WSDOT)

Introduction

Theresa Smith, Policy and Planning Manager of WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail welcomed the Technical Work Group. She reminded the group that their role was one of action and that the success of the new program is dependent upon everyone pulling together to move program forward.

Goals for the Grant Technical Work Group

The primary goal for the Office of Transit Mobility is to facilitate system coordination of public transportation issues between transit agencies, and also to improve the integration of public transportation into roadway development and regional corridor development. The expectation is that the grant program will promote this coordination and connection. The WSDOT Regional Mobility Grant Program was budgeted \$20 million dollars for the 2005-07 biennium. The Grant Technical Work Group will recommend grant criteria, a framework for the program and recommend project prioritization that accomplishes the intent of the legislation. Local governments are the eligible recipients of the grant funds for the targeted grants.

Framing Expectations for the Regional Mobility Grant Program

Several Technical Work Group members expressed their thoughts, ideas and questions on what their roles should be. Mike Harbour offered a recap of the grant discussion from the July 19th Advisory Committee, which framed the categories for draft grant criteria. The group discussed the categories at length and recommended minor revisions to the criteria. Projects will be prioritized as high, medium and low priorities and submitted to the Washington State Legislature for final determination of grant distribution.

Discussion Issue: Development on park and ride lot programs

What is the state's role in park and ride lots? Of 300 or so, the state only owns about 100 of them. In the beginning, WSDOT had a good plan and played a lead role in the development of the park and ride lot system. However, as funds vanished the state role in park and ride planning and development also changed. A key question today is in

regard to the role of the state with park and ride facilities, both existing and future sites. Who is the appropriate party to maintain the facilities? It was explained that the OTM Advisory Committee will tackle the policy discussion on this issue following completion of their tasks associated with the first year grants.

Discussion Issue: Choke points and bottlenecks

The question was raised about the coordination and interaction of regional and local plans and in relation to the bottlenecks and chokepoints identified on the state highway system plan. The Washington Transportation Plan took a look at the issue from a highway perspective and identified locations on the system. Theresa Smith asked whether the transit agencies know the locations of transit-related chokepoints and if the locations correlated to each other. If similarities existed, this may be an area to target investments within the Regional Mobility Grant Program.

Discussion Issue: Grant Technical Work Group tasks needed direction from the Advisory Committee.

Several questions arose regarding equitable distribution statewide, how to value construction projects versus preliminary engineering projects, service projects versus capital projects, and other policy decisions. The work group forwarded to the advisory committee a need for policy direction on the issue of geographic equity and asked staff to do so. It is a goal for both the advisory committee and the work group that strategic projects are submitted statewide which provide opportunities for targeted investments that accomplish the intent of the law.

Proposed Questions for the new Grant Application

The grant application for the Regional Mobility Grant Program will be based on the approach for WSDOT's Safe Route To Schools program. The application utilizes an essay approach instead of a standard grant application form. Prospective grant recipients will be required to describe the project, the problem they intend to solve with the project and the benefits of the project to the transportation system, all within a specific page limit.

Staff prepared draft grant application questions to help initiate discussion in the Grant Technical Work Group. The work group used the draft questions in their discussion for the remainder of the meeting and revised the language as indicated below.

Other Issues

Questions were raised how to expedite right of way related issues that may be associated with a particular project. The Grant Technical Work Group may recommend that staff and the advisory committee work within the department and the Attorneys General Office to resolve any difficulties that may arise.

On another matter, the work group stated concern that more work was necessary to improve the new grant process so that better system integration of all modes occurs. The integration of modes, partnerships of public agencies to each other, and partnerships with private interests were identified as areas for improvement.

Potential Grant Application Questions

1. What is the problem you are trying to solve?

- A. Concisely describe the project and why you are pursuing the project.
- B. What problem will the project solve and what is the expected outcome?
- C. Describe the benefits of the project?
- D. What options were considered to accomplish the objective?
 - Specific alternatives
 - Do nothing
- E. What happens if the project does not proceed?
- F. Will the project be combined or grouped with other projects?

2. What are the system improvements you expect from the project?

- A. How will this project improve overall system performance in the corridor and on public transportation, including new travel options?
- B. Is the project a new idea or previously included in the regional Congestion Management System?

3. What is happening on the corridor now?

- A. Describe the performance and delay in the corridor and its impact on any existing transit services.
- B. Attach land use and project map and indicate significant destination centers.
- C. What is preventing you from solving the problem now? What assurance do you have that the project will solve the problem?

4. How will the project lead to improved coordination?

- A. How will this project improve system integration to other travel modes, transit services or pedestrian/bike facilities?
- B. How do you plan to demonstrate improvement connection or better system integration?
- C. Is the project consistent with the local/regional transportation plans?
- D. How would you measure success of the project?

5. What is the financial plan for the project?

- A. Describe the financial plan to complete the project.
- B. All available or leveraged funds should be identified.
- C. Describe your plans to continue the project into the future.

6. Other relevant information

- A. Describe the readiness of the project - Is the project ready to implement?
- B. Describe the project schedule.
- C. Are there partners involved in the project including financial partners?
Describe the project lead and co-lead.

Next steps for the Grant Technical Work Group

The deadline for developing grant criteria and the grant application process is September 1 and a call for projects occurs by September 15, 2005. Project workshops are scheduled for September 20 and October 11 in Seattle.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be August 9 at 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the WSDOT Urban Planning Conference Room, Suite 300, Seattle, WA.